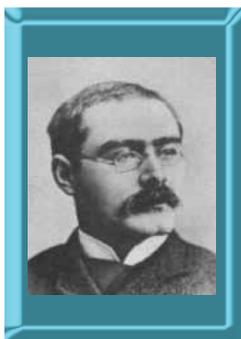




MOTI GUJ – MUTINEER

Rudyard Joseph Kipling

Rudyard Joseph Kipling (1865-1936) was an English writer and Nobel laureate, who wrote novels, poems, and short stories, mostly set in India and Burma (now known as Myanmar) during the time of British rule. Kipling was born in Bombay (now Mumbai), India, and at age six, was sent to be educated in England. From 1882 to 1889 he edited and wrote short stories for the Civil and Military Gazette of Lahore, India. He then published *Departmental Ditties* (1886), satirical verse dealing with civil and military barracks life in British colonial India, and a collection of his magazine stories called *Plain Tales from the Hills* (1887). He received the 1907 Nobel Prize in literature, the first English author to be so honored. Kipling died on January 18, 1936, in London.



A mutineer is a person who openly rebels against authority. You must have read of soldiers rising in mutiny but have you ever heard of an elephant becoming a mutineer? Well, this is the story of such an elephant. His name is Moti Guj. He is as intelligent, as loyal and loving as anyone of us, yet he rebels. Read the story and find out why he becomes a mutineer, what he does and how he ceases to be a mutineer.

Once upon a time there was a coffee-planter in India who wished to clear some forest land for coffee-planting. When he had cut down all the trees, the stumps still remained. The planter hired elephants for stump-clearing.

The very best of all the elephants belonged to the very worst of all the drivers or mahouts; and this superior beast's name was Moti Guj, which means the Pearl Elephant. He was the absolute property of his mahout, Deesa.

Deesa was a foolish drunkard. When he had made much money through the strength of his elephant, he would get extremely drunk and give Moti Guj a beating with a tent peg over the tender nails of the forefeet. Moti Guj never trampled the life out of Deesa on these occasions. He knew that after the beating was over, Deesa would embrace his trunk and weep. He would call him his love and give him some liquor which Moti Guj was very fond of.

Moti Guj and Deesa worked hard. Deesa sat on Moti Guj's neck and gave him orders. Moti Guj rooted up the stumps for he owned a magnificent pair of tusks. While Moti Guj worked, Deesa kicked him behind the ears and called him the king of elephants. At evening Moti Guj would mix his three hundred pounds of green with a bottle of liquor. Deesa would also take a share, and sing songs between Moti Guj's legs till it was time to go to bed.

Once a week Deesa led Moti Guj down to the river. Moti Guj lay on his side in the shallows, while Deesa rubbed him with a coir swab and a brick. Moti Guj never mistook the pounding blow of the brick or the smack of the coir swab that warned him to get up and turn over on the other side. Then Deesa would look at his feet and examine his eyes, and turn up the corners of his mighty ears in case of sores. After inspection the two would stand up. Moti Guj, all black and shining, waving a torn tree branch twelve feet long in his trunk, and Deesa knotting up his own long wet hair.

It was a peaceful, well-paid life till Deesa felt the return of the desire to drink deep. The little amount of liquor that he got did not satisfy him.

He went to the planter. "My mother's dead", said he, weeping.

"She died on the last plantation two months ago, and she had died once before when you were working for me last year", said the planter, who knew something of Deesa's ways.

"Then it was my aunt, and she was just the same as a mother to me", said Deesa, weeping more than ever.

"Who brought the news?" said the planter.

"The post", said Deesa.

"There hasn't been a post here for the past week. Get back to work!"

"There is plague in my village, and all my wives are dying", yelled Deesa, really in tears this time.

"Call Chihun, who comes from Deesa's village", said the planter.

"Chihun, has this man got a wife?" He said.

Chihun replies, "No. Not one woman of our village would look at him. They'd sooner marry the elephant."

Deesa wept all the more.

"Go back to work!" shouted the planter.

Deesa had an inspiration.

“Now I will speak the truth. I haven’t been drunk for two months. I want to go in order to get properly drunk. I’ll be at a distance from this heavenly plantation and shall cause you no trouble.”

A smile crossed the planter’s face. “Deesa,” said he, “you’ve spoken the truth, and I’d give you leave if anyone could take care of Moti Guj. You know that he will only obey your orders.”

“May God bless you!” cried Deesa. “I shall be absent but ten little days. After that, I’ll return. Have I your gracious permission to call up Moti Guj?”

Permission was granted, and in answer to Deesa’s shrill yell, the mighty tusker swung out of the shade of some trees where he had been pouring dust over himself till his master should return.

“Light of my heart, mountain of might, give ear,” said Deesa, standing in front of him.

Moti Guj gave ear, and saluted with his trunk. “I am going away”, said Deesa .

Moti Guj’s eyes twinkled. He liked holidays as well as his master. One could snatch all manner of nice things from the roadside then.

“But you must stay behind and work.”

The twinkle died out as Moti Guj tried to look delighted.

“I shall be gone for ten days. Hold up your rear forefoot and I’ll impress the fact upon it.” Deesa took a tent-peg and hit Moti Guj ten times on the nails. Moti Guj grunted and shuffled from foot to foot.

“Ten days,” said Deesa, “you will work and obey the orders of Chihun. Take up Chihun and set him on your neck.”

Moti Guj curled the tip of his trunk. Chihun put his feet there, and was swung on to his neck. Deesa handed Chihun the heavy ankus — the iron goad.

Chihun patted Moti Guj’s bald head and the elephant trumpeted.

“Be still, beast after my own heart: Chihun’s your mahout for ten days. And now bid me goodbye, Jewel of all Created Elephants, Lily of the Herd. Be good and may God bless you!”

Moti Guj put his trunk round Deesa and swung him into the air twice. That was his way of bidding him goodbye.

“He’ll work now,” said Deesa to the planter. “Have I leave to go?”

Before the planter nodded Deesa had dived into the woods. Moti Guj went back to dig out stumps.

Chihun was very kind to him, but Moti Guj felt unhappy and lonely.

Nonetheless he worked well, and the planter wondered. Deesa had wandered along the roads till he met a marriage procession of his own caste. Drinking and dancing, he lost count of days.

The morning of the eleventh day dawned, and there returned no Deesa. Moti Guj was loosed from his ropes. He swung clear, looked round, shrugged his shoulders, and began to walk away, as one having business elsewhere.

“Hi ! ho. Come back you,” shouted Chihun. “Come back and put me on your neck, you wicked mountain. Return or I’ll bang every toe off your fat forefoot.”

Moti Guj sighed gently, but did not obey. Chihun, ran after him with a rope and caught him up. Moti Guj put his ears forward, and Chihun knew what that meant but pretended to be brave.

“None of your nonsense with me,” said he. “To the fields, you devil.”

“Hrrump,” said Moti Guj, and that was all that and the forebent ears.

Moti Guj strolled about the clearing, making fun of the other elephants, who had just set to work.

Chihun reported the state of affairs to the planter, who came out with a dog-whip. Moti Guj chased the planter, hrrumping loudly, till he reached the veranda of his house. Then he stood outside, chuckling to himself and shaking all over with the fun of it, as an elephant will.

Moti Guj then rolled back to his inspection of the clearing. An elephant who will not work and is not tied up is most unmanageable. He slapped old friends on the back and asked them if the stumps were coming away easily; he talked nonsense about the rights of elephants to a long holidays and, wandering to and fro, he thoroughly spoilt the garden. In the evening he returned for food.

“If you won’t work, you shan’t eat,” said Chihun angrily. “You’re a wild elephant, and not an educated one. Go back to your jungle.”

Chihun’s little baby was rolling on the floor of the hut. Moti Guj knew well that it was the dearest thing on the earth to Chihun. He swung out his trunk, and picked up the baby.

He had lifted it up before Chihun realised what was happening. Soon the baby was crowing in the air twelve foot above his father’s head.

“Great Lord,” said Chihun. “Flour cakes of the best, twelve in number, two feet across

and soaked in liquor, shall be yours this minute, and two hundred pounds of fresh-cut young sugarcane. Only put down safely that small child who is my heart and my life.”

Moti Guj tucked the baby comfortably between his forefeet, and waited for his food. He ate it, and the baby crawled away. Moti Guj dozed and thought of Deesa. At dawn Deesa returned to the plantation. He had a lot of liquor and he expected to get into trouble for out-staying his leave. He reported for work with many lies and salaams. Moti Guj had gone for breakfast.

“Call up your beast,” said the planter; and Deesa shouted in the mysterious elephant language. Moti Guj heard and came. Elephants do not gallop. They move from one place to another at varying rates of speed. If an elephant wished to catch an express train he would not gallop, but he would catch the train. So Moti Guj was at the planter’s door. He fell into Deesa’s arms trumpeting with joy, and the man and beast wept and slobbered over each other.

“Now we will get to work,” said Deesa. “Lift me up, my son and my joy.”

Moti Guj swung him up, and the two went to the coffee clearing to look for difficult stumps.

The planter was too astonished to be very angry.

Glossary

trample	'træmpɪ	to step heavily on something or someone, causing damage or injury.
pound	paʊnd	hit or beat repeatedly.
smack	smæk	hit forcefully.
yell	jel	to shout at someone.
shrill	ʃrɪl	high pitched sound.
trumpet (v)	'trʌmpɪt/ɪ	to announce or state something proudly to a lot of people.
stump	stʌmp	the base of a tree trunk and its roots after the tree has been felled.
bang	bæŋ	to make a sudden loud noise.
chuckle	'tʃʌkl	to laugh quietly.
gallop	'gæləp	to run fast so that all four feet come off the ground together.
slobber over	slɒb.ə' əʊ.və'	to show too much admiration and liking for someone.



Thinking about the Text

1. Why did Moti Guj love his master even though he would beat him sometimes?
2. How long was Deesa to be away and how did he tell Moti Guj about this?
3. What were the lies Deesa told his employer? Why did he tell such dreadful stories?
4. How did Deesa look after Moti Guj?
5. How did Moti Guj bid Deesa goodbye?
6. Why did Moti Guj become a mutineer?
7. How did Moti Guj react to Deesa's return?
8. Why was Chihun angry with Moti Guj? How did Moti Guj react to his remarks?



Language work

1. The following verbs remain unchanged in the conjugation:

Present	Past	Past participle
Beat	Beat	Beat
Broadcast	Broadcast	Broadcast
Telecast	Telecast	Telecast
Put	Put	Put

Identify five more verbs which remain unchanged in the conjugation.

2. Note the positive, comparative and superlative degrees of the following adjectives:

Positive	Comparative	Superlative
Good	Better	Best
Bad	Worse	Worst

Form degrees of comparison of the following adjectives:

Little
 Few
 Hot
 Big
 Thin
 Fat

Cold

Great

Bright

Light

Lovely

Writing work

1. Write an account of love between Deesa and Moti Guj.
2. Write a short essay on the preservation of Wildlife.

Discussion

What is rebellion? List the factors that incite one to rebellion.

Suggested Reading

Rikki Tiki Tavi (story of a mongoose) by Rudyard Kipling.

My Grandfather's Zoo by Ruskin Bond.